

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

FROM:

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

29 July 1981

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1.

D/Personnel 5 E 13

2.

D/Pers

3.

D/Pers/PATE

4.

Chief. PPS

5.

Bul

6.

Cue

7.

Jen

8.

Pete

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

Alger back to me so
Pete can have on Monday

PAR Survey -

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8225

28 JUL 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Career Management Staff

VIA : C/CMS/PEB

FROM :

Vice Chairman, GS-13/14 Evaluation
Boards, Emeritus

SUBJECT : GS-13/14 Evaluation Board Comments on the
PAR System

1. The following is based primarily on the experience of the DDO FY 1980 GS-14 and the FY 1981 GS-13 Evaluation Boards, the first Boards at each grade level to work with the new Performance Appraisal Report (PAR), the Advanced Work Plan (AWP), and the Evaluation of Potential form (EOP). It is comparisons between the new PAR system and the old Fitness Report (FR) procedure which seem to go to the heart of the comments/problems which our Boards and Panels have made concerning the effectiveness of the new PAR system at the GS-13/14 level.

2. There was almost no contention that the AWP was in any way better than the traditional Fitness Report (FR) form. There was ready acceptance by several Board members of the incorporation of an Employee Comments Section in the PAR, although both Boards noted that it was being little used to date. Use so far has been almost exclusively for rebuttals. DO GS-13/14 Boards are hopeful that employees will eventually make positive use of this opportunity to comment on career goals, relationship of an assignment to career development, desires for training, future assignment preferences, etc.

3. There was some sentiment, by no means universal, that guidance on preparing the new PAR was more specific and better conceived than that for the old FR. Complaints about the performance appraisal system, however, were abundant. They ranged from basic disagreement with its concept to sheer frustration with the physical package involved. Fortunately, Board members were ready with suggestions regarding the aspects with which they were less than satisfied, and most of these suggestions were for changes back toward the old Fitness Report form and the DO system that had been built up around its use.

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4. Starting with the AWP, there was agreement that it was of no real value to the evaluation of DO officers--particularly those--as most GS-13/14s are--with tasks that defy effective quantification. If a document such as the AWP is useful between supervisors and employees to define the employee's responsibilities, so be it. But Evaluation Panel members were near universal in their estimate that the traditional DO Letter of Instruction would serve this purpose much better than the AWP and that Evaluation Panels did not need either as long as the PAR listed specific duties. What they are seeking, and most FR/PAR narratives give them, is a short descriptive statement of the officer's actual job at the beginning of the PAR/FR narrative. At the GS-13/14 level, separate lists of Specific Duties or AWP Work Objectives are often more of an irritant than a help. At that level, it is rare that anything more than the title or a sentence or two description of an officer's role is needed. Evaluation Panel members, experienced officers at the GS-15 and up level, have a full appreciation of what is involved in most DDO GS-13/14 work situations. Obviously if there is some special situation or task which the officer was assigned to handle, it should be pointed up by the narrative writer. But, in sum, our GS-13/14 Boards felt that the PAR/FR narrative had to address the officer's role/responsibilities in any case as a basis for an intelligent judgement of the officer's accomplishments. As a result, the AWP became a redundant part of the evaluation package which Evaluation Panel members generally did not have time to assimilate--or usually even to look at. From the viewpoint of the personnel evaluation process, typical of comments of senior officers about the AWP were:

"Of no real value."

"Just verbiage to meet a bureaucratic levy."

"For DDO work, it's an Alice in Wonderland requirement."

5. But the most strident criticisms were reserved for the Evaluation of Potential (EOP) requirement. There was agreement that on the FR, writers may too often have failed to comment on an officer's potential. But the EOP form was considered at best to have "created a great deal of confusion" and at worst to be an "exercise in verbiage" and "an insidious cop-out." There was broad agreement that an officer's potential should be defined as an integral part of the narrative discussion of his performance. One senior

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officer suggested: "If an employee has obvious potential to assume greater responsibilities, it should be so stated in the PAR narrative. Many times a rated employee does not have obvious potential to assume greater responsibilities and in such cases I do not see any advantages to make that observation a matter of record. It certainly doesn't help a person's morale to see in writing that they apparently don't have anything further to offer (in the supervisor's opinion)."

6. There was agreement by all that the definitions in the EOP are "unclear and hard to rationalize." One suggestion which had considerable Board support was to use the Comparative Evaluation Grouping (CEG) as the basis for supervisor and reviewing officer evaluations of an employee's potential. (Note: My own view is that if current CEG definitions are used as an integral part of a PAR/FR that they will soon become inflated just as the letter and number grades have tended to do. I would rather see potential addressed in the body of the rater's narrative and the CEG reserved for an independent judgement by panels as they evaluate files as a whole.) Regarding the EOP I believe there is a fundamental problem. While the EOP is established as a separate measure of Potential, it mixes it up with Performance. In other words, Potential judgement could be kept independent if we had an EOP form with places to check that would say simply: "Employee appears to lack the capability to assume higher level responsibility," "Employee is ready to assume higher level responsibility," or "The rater believes the employee will develop the ability to assume higher level responsibility, but he is not yet ready to assume it." The current EOP form unfortunately muddies the middle ground by talking about such things as the employee needing training or having "room to grow within the scope of responsibilities of the present job." This middle ground has proven to be a cop-out for raters. In addition, misuse of the form, largely the result, I think, of its inadequacies, is rampant. And in many cases officers have been hurt competitively when it seems that was not at all the rater or the components intention. But overall, our Boards think it better to drop the EOP form rather than to revise it and to comment on potential as required as an integral part of the PAR/FR narrative.

Examples?

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7. In sum, members of the two first GS-13 and GS-14 DDO Evaluation Boards who worked with the new PAR System were unanimous in their statements that the key value to both it and the former FR system is the narrative section. All other portions of either format were strictly ancillary in effectively judging an employee's performance. The PAR system, then, has the distinct disadvantage of accumulating more excess baggage around the critical heart of the material needed for effective evaluation. To the extent that the added documentation distracts from the main effort to evaluate performance, the PAR procedure turns out to be a less effective working system than the simpler use of the Fitness Report and the Letter of Instruction.

25X1

cc: C/CMS/PEB
✓ Director of Personnel
CMS/PE/13-14
CMS/PE/7-12
CMS/Clerical

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ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

Date

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number,
building, Agency/Post)

Initials

Date

1.

Carl

Bj

10 Aug

2.

Bob

3.

4.

5.

Action	File	Note and Return
Approval	For Clearance	Per Conversation
As Requested	For Correction	Prepare Reply
Circulate	For Your Information	See Me
Comment	Investigate	Signature
Coordination	Justify	

REMARKS

Interview was the DDO
is "participating" in survey
after DDO PMAB rep & I/R
how new OAR report -
harumph!

DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disposals,
clearances, and similar actions

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)

Room No.—Bldg.

Phone No.

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